



MUMBAI

American Center ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Bulletin

NOVEMBER

2006

CYBERSTALKING

Men kept knocking on her door in the middle of the night, saying they wanted to rape her. Eventually, the Los Angeles District Attorney's office caught – and successfully prosecuted – a 50-year-old man who used the Internet to impersonate his 28-year-old victim in various chat rooms and bulletin boards, where he posted, along with her telephone number and address, messages that she fantasized about being raped. On at least six occasions, men tried to take her up on it. The man who terrorized her, a former security guard whose advances she'd once declined, pleaded guilty in April 1999 to one count of stalking and three counts of solicitation of sexual assault. The case was the first successful use of California's anti-cyberstalking law, which carries a possible sentence of up to six years in prison.

Although there is no universally accepted definition of cyberstalking, the term is used to refer to the use of the Internet to stalk another person. Stalking involves harassing or threatening behavior that an individual engages in repeatedly, such as following a person, appearing at a person's home or place of business, making abusive phone calls, leaving written messages or objects, or vandalizing a person's property.

The same aspects of the Internet that make it so useful for people to get online and participate in a virtual community – low cost, ease of use, and anonymous nature, among others – also make it an attractive medium for fraudulent scams, child sexual exploitation, and increasingly, cyberstalking. Many stalkers – online or off – are motivated by a desire to exert control over their victims. As with off-line stalking, the available evidence (which is largely anecdotal) suggests that the majority of cyberstalkers are men and the majority of their victims are women, although there have been reported cases of women cyberstalking men as well as of same-sex cyberstalking. In many cases, the cyberstalker and the victim know each other, but there have also been many instances of cyberstalking by strangers. The fact that cyberstalking does not involve physical contact may create the misperception that it is more benign than physical stalking. This is not necessarily true. The Internet's ease of use, and its nonconfrontational, impersonal, and sometimes anonymous nature may remove disincentives to cyberstalking. Put another way, whereas a potential stalker may be unwilling or unable to confront a victim in person or on the telephone, he or she may have little hesitation sending harassing or threatening electronic communications to a victim. Finally, as with

physical stalking, on-line harassment and threats may be a prelude to more serious behavior, including physical violence.

A cyberstalker may send repeated, threatening, or harassing messages by the simple push of a button; more sophisticated cyberstalkers use programs to send messages at regular or random intervals without being physically present at the computer terminal. In addition, a cyberstalker can dupe other Internet users into harassing or threatening a victim by utilizing Internet bulletin boards or chat rooms – posting a controversial or enticing message on the board under the name, phone number, or e-mail address of the victim, resulting in subsequent responses being sent to the victim. Each message – whether from the actual cyberstalker or others – will have the intended effect on the victim, but the cyberstalker's effort is minimal and the lack of direct contact between the cyberstalker and the victim can make it difficult for law enforcement to identify, locate, and arrest the offender.

The anonymity of the Internet also provides new opportunities for would-be cyberstalkers. A cyberstalker's true identity can be concealed by using different ISPs and/or by adopting different screen names. More experienced stalkers can use anonymous re-mailers that make it all-but-impossible to determine the true identity of the source of an e-mail or other electronic communication. Unbeknownst to the target, the perpetrator could be in another state, around the corner, or in the next cubicle at work. The perpetrator could be a former friend or lover, a total stranger met in a chat room, or simply a teenager playing a practical joke. The inability to identify the source of the harassment or threats could be particularly ominous to a cyberstalking victim, and the veil of anonymity might encourage the perpetrator to continue these acts. In addition, some perpetrators, armed with the knowledge that their identity is unknown, might be more willing to pursue the victim at work or home, and the Internet can provide substantial information to this end. Numerous web sites will provide personal information, including unlisted telephone numbers and detailed directions to a home or office. For a fee, other web sites promise to provide social security numbers, financial data, and other personal information.

Current Efforts to Address Cyberstalking

Many cyberstalking victims in the U.S. do not notify law enforcement, either because they feel that the

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Website: <http://mumbai.usconsulate.gov>
Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
(Monday through Friday)

HOLIDAYS

November 10: Veterans Day*
November 23: Thanksgiving Day

***In lieu of November 11**

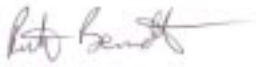
A WORD FROM THE CENTER

When you're surfing the Internet in your living room on a Sunday morning, with just your coffee and the crows outside the window for company, it can be hard to reconcile the intuitive feeling of cozy privacy with the fact that you might as well be in the middle of a busy public square, bunny slippers and all.

Our web footprints, it turns out, are not delicate impressions in the sand that get washed away when we log off. Increasingly, they're like the celebrity footprints set in concrete at the famous Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood: enduring, easily-accessible, and frequently visited.

It can be tempting to shrug and declare oneself an open book. But, as this month's bulletin article makes clear, it doesn't matter what path you walk; anyone can be a cyber victim. Footsteps attract attention, both good and bad.

Internet technology is still new, and the social problems it engenders, still newer. The answers are not yet there. But this month's article reminds us to at least give a thought to the company we may unintentionally keep when we go out walking on the web.



Ruth Bennett
Deputy Director

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conduct has not reached the point of being a criminal offense or that law enforcement will not take them seriously. There are also many law enforcement agencies that have not had the training to recognize the serious nature of cyberstalking and to investigate such offenses. Some victims have reported that the agencies have advised them to come back if the cyberstalkers confront or threaten them offline. In several instances, victims have been told by law enforcement simply to turn off their computers.

Some local law enforcement agencies also have been frustrated by jurisdictional limitations. In many instances, the cyberstalker may be located in a different city or state than the victim making it more difficult (and, in some cases, all but impossible) for the local authority to investigate the incident.

In the U.S., one of the most promising responses to cyberstalking comes from the use of specialized units within law enforcement agencies. In major metropolitan cities, these units receive special training in topics such as how chat rooms operate, how to obtain and preserve electronic evidence, and how to trace communications sent over computers and the Internet. Traditional law enforcement techniques for surveillance, investigation, and evidence gathering require modification for use on computer networks and often require the use of unfamiliar legal processes. Just as a burglar might leave fingerprints at the scene of a crime, a cyberstalker can leave an "electronic trail" on the web that properly trained law enforcement officials can follow back to the source. A critical step in combating cyberstalking is understanding stalking in general. In many instances, cyberstalking is simply another phase in an overall stalking pattern, or it is regular stalking behavior using new,

What To Do If You Are Being Cyberstalked

- If you are receiving unwanted contact, make clear to that person that you would like him or her not to contact you again.
- Save all communications for evidence. Do not edit or alter them in any way. Also, keep a record of your contacts with Internet system administrators or law enforcement officials. Many chat rooms automatically archive all conversations; if you didn't save the conversation at the time, you may be able to contact the chat room provider for a transcript after the fact.
- Don't share personal information in public spaces anywhere online, nor give it to strangers, including in e-mail or chat rooms. Do not use your real name or nickname as your screen name or user ID. Pick a name that is gender- and age-neutral. And do not post personal information as part of any user profiles. This is a good practice, whether you are being stalked or not.
- You may want to consider blocking or filtering messages from the harasser. Many e-mail programs such as Eudora and Microsoft Outlook have a filter feature, and software can be easily obtained that will automatically delete e-mails from a particular e-mail address or that contain offensive words. Chat room contact can be blocked as well. Although formats differ, a common chat-room command to block someone would be to type: /ignore <person's screen name> (without the brackets). However, in some circumstances (such as threats of violence), it may be more appropriate to save the information and contact law enforcement authorities.
- If harassment continues after you have asked the person to stop, contact the harasser's Internet Service Provider (ISP). Most ISPs have clear policies prohibiting the use of their services to abuse another person. Often, an ISP can try to stop the conduct by direct contact with the stalker or by closing their account. If you receive abusive e-mails, identify the domain (after the "@" sign) and contact that ISP. Most ISPs have an e-mail address such as abuse@(domain name) or postmaster@(domain name) that can be used for complaints. If the ISP has a web site, visit it for information on how to file a complaint.

high-technology tools. Thus, strategies and techniques that have been developed to combat stalking in general often can be adapted to cyberstalking situations.

Industry Efforts

The Internet industry has not singled out cyberstalking as a threat to be addressed, but does attempt to combat abusive electronic communications in general. Most major Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have established an address to which complaints of abusive or harassing electronic mail can be sent. In addition, these providers almost uniformly have provisions in their on-line agreements specifically prohibiting abusive or harassing conduct through their service and providing that violations of the policy will result in termination of the account.

In practice, however, ISPs have focused more on assisting their customers in avoiding annoying on-line behavior, such as receiving unsolicited commercial electronic mail ("spamming"); relatively less attention has been

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Cyberstalking Resources Online

CyberAngels: Nonprofit group devoted to assisting victims of on-line harassment and threats, including cyberstalking. www.cyberangels.org

GetNetWise: On-line resource for families and caregivers to help kids use the Internet in a safe and educational manner. Includes a guide to on-line safety, a directory of on-line safety tools, and directions for reporting on-line trouble. www.getnetwise.org

The National Center for Victims of Crime: The National Center for Victims of Crime publishes bulletins on a number of topics, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. www.ncvc.org

Privacy Rights Clearinghouse: Nonprofit consumer information and advocacy program that offers consumers a unique opportunity to learn how to protect their personal privacy. www.privacyrights.org

Working to Halt Online Abuse (WHOA): Founded by women to educate the Internet community about on-line harassment, WHOA empowers victims of on-line harassment and develops voluntary policies that systems administrators can adopt to create an environment free of on-line harassment. WHOA educates the on-line community by developing web site resources, including the creation of a safe-site and unsafe-site list to enable users to make informed decisions, and providing information about how users can protect themselves against harassment. www.haltabuse.org

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paid to helping victims of cyberstalking. In addition, many ISPs do not inform their customers about what steps, if any, they have taken to follow-up on their customer's complaint. Other Internet sectors, such as e-mail providers, focus on the ability of individuals to protect themselves against unwanted communications. For example, most Internet "chat" and mail facilities offer users the ability to block or ignore individuals who are attempting to annoy or threaten them. Such a solution may be useful in situations where the communications are merely annoying. Unfortunately, such a solution is less appropriate when threatening communications are received, because a victim who never "receives" the threat may not know they are being stalked, and may be alerted, for the first time, when the stalker shows up to act on the threat.

Currently, all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia have enacted some type of stalking law. In addition, there are some federal laws against harassment and threatening behavior that can and have been applied to cyberstalking. Victims, however, need more than laws. In a focus group convened in 1998 by the Office for Victims of Crime, a branch of the U.S. Department of Justice, respondents emphasized the need for a wide range of services, from doctors, mental-health providers, day-care providers, welfare and child protection workers, school staff, and employers. In addition, the focus group participants said that community awareness and understanding of what constitutes stalking behavior is critical to the support and well-being of stalking victims. Finally, all of the stalking victims reported that the consequences of not being believed or supported, or having their fears viewed as exaggerated or unrealistic, can be devastating. Some victims feel isolated and alone, are made to believe that the stalking is their fault, lose primary relationships, or fear losing their jobs. These issues are just as relevant to cyberstalking victims as they are to victims of off-line stalking.

Excerpted, adapted, and updated from the 1999 Department of Justice Report from the Attorney General to the Vice President:
<http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/cybercrime/cyberstalking.htm>

NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

A Select Webliography on Violence Against Women and Child Abuse

<http://www.abanet.org/domviol/home.html>

American Bar Association – Commission on Domestic Violence

<http://www.aclu.org/womensrights/violence/index.html>

American Civil Liberties Union – Violence Against Women

<http://www.bwjp.org/>

The Battered Women's Justice Project

<http://www.gocrc.com/>

Children's Rights Council

<http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cid/cac/crimesmain.htm>

Federal Bureau of Investigation – Crimes Against Children

<http://www.ispcan.org/>

International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

<http://www.stopvaw.org/>

Stop Violence Against Women – A Project by Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights

<http://www.mincava.umn.edu/>

Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse

<http://www.naesv.org/>

The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence

<http://www.ncdsv.org/>

National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence

<http://www.ncadv.org/>

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

http://www.ndaa.org/links/violence_against_women_links.html

National District Attorneys Association – Violence Against Women Links

<http://www.now.org/issues/violence/>

National Organization for Women (NOW) – Violence Against Women

<http://www.nsvrc.org/>

National Sexual Violence Resource Center

<http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/index.asp>

National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/>

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services – Administration for Children & Families

<http://www.usdoj.gov/ovw/>

United States Department of Justice – Office on Violence Against Women

<http://www.4woman.gov/violence/>

Womenshealth.gov – Violence Against Women

Note: Internet sites included in this listing, other than those of the U.S. Government, should not be construed as an endorsement of the views contained therein.

MUMBAI MONDAYS

A Discussion on The American Stock Market System led by Adam Riggs

Monday, November 20
American Center Auditorium

6:00 p.m.

Adam Riggs will speak on "The Wall Street Stock Exchange – The Perspective from the Floor." He will share his insight gained from years working on the trading floor, being right in the center of the financial world, where fortunes are gained and lost every day. Come and learn about the inner workings of the fascinating world of the markets.

Adam Riggs is originally from the Washington, D.C. area, but studied on the West Coast and then lived in New York for ten years. Mr. Riggs has a degree in sociology and worked for seven years on Wall Street at the New York Stock Exchange. He has also been a partner in his own company, Shutterstock, for the last two years.

A THANKSGIVING RECIPE

INDIAN PUDDING (6 SERVINGS)

Indian pudding dates back to Pilgrim days, when cornmeal, the principal ingredient, was known as "Indian meal" in reference to America's native peoples, who taught the settlers how to grow corn. A truly warming dessert, with a taste and texture somewhat like pumpkin pie.

Preheat the oven to 275°F. Generously butter a heavy 8- to 9-inch baking dish.

Measure into a large, heavy saucepan:

1/3 cup plus 1 tablespoon cornmeal

Stir in, very gradually at first, to prevent lumps:

4 cups whole milk

Stirring constantly, bring to a boil over medium heat and cook for 3 minutes. Reduce the heat as low as possible and cook for 15 minutes, stirring frequently. Remove from the heat and whisk in:

1/2 cup light or dark molasses

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

2 tablespoons sugar

1 1/2 teaspoons ground ginger

3/4 teaspoon salt

Turn the pudding into the prepared dish. Bake until the center looks firm but still slightly quivery when the dish is shaken, 2 1/2 to 3 hours. A dark crust will form on top. Let cool on a rack for 30-60 minutes, then serve with:

Vanilla ice cream or fresh cream

The pudding can be made up to three days ahead. Cool completely, cover with aluminum foil, and refrigerate. To reheat, bake, still covered with foil, in a 275°F oven for 45-60 minutes.

Source: **Joy of Cooking** by Irma S. Rombauer, Marion Rombauer Becker and Ethan Becker. This book is available for reference in the American Library collection.

FILMS THIS MONTH

CYBER TALES

Friday, November 17 *The Net* (1995, color, 114 mins)

Friday, November 24 *Minority Report* (2002, color, 146 mins)

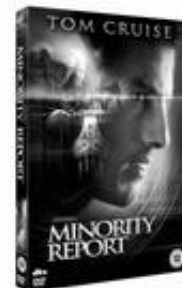
American Center Auditorium

3:30 and 6:30 p.m. each day



The Net is a sleek suspense film with Sandra Bullock as a lonely computer wizard whose Mexican vacation turns dangerous when she meets a British hacker in search of a disk that offers access to secret government files. Back in the U.S., Bullock discovers that her identity has been "deleted" as she is pursued by both police and the disk's mysterious designers. Jeremy Northam, Dennis Miller and Diane Baker costar.

In Steven Spielberg's electrifying adaptation of Philip K. Dick's story, Tom Cruise is a futuristic detective for a Washington, D.C. agency that uses psychics known as "Pre-Cogs" to track down would-be murderers and bust them before they kill. When the psychics' visions show Cruise as a killer, he's forced to dodge determined federal agent Colin Farrell and his crew to find the potential victim and the reasons behind the premonition. Max Von Sydow, Samantha Morton and Peter Stormare also star.



DID YOU KNOW?

National Authors' Day (November 1)

This observance was adopted by the General Federation of Women's Club in 1929 and in 1949, was given a place on the list of special days, weeks and months prepared by the U.S. Department of Commerce. The resolution states: "by celebrating an Authors' Day as a nation, we would not only show patriotism, loyalty, and appreciation of the men and women who have made American literature possible, but would also encourage and inspire others to give of themselves in making a better America..." It was also resolved "that we commemorate an Authors' Day to be observed on November First each year."

Source: **Chase's 2006 Calendar of Events**

Admission to all American Center programs, restricted to persons over 16, will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Please bring the envelope containing this issue of the bulletin for admission (maximum two persons). The auditorium doors will open 30 minutes before the start of the program.

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